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GABRIELSON WARNS AGAINST RETURN TO OLD WAYS OF WATERFOWL HUNTING

"If we are to have duck shooting in the years to come and if the great duck marshes still existing in this country are to have strong flights of birds in the future, we must never again permit the killing in any year of more birds than are produced," declared Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey today.

Speaking before the North American Wildlife Conference, at Baltimore, Md., on the Federal waterfowl regulations formulated and administered by the Survey, Doctor Gabrielson warned that liberalizing the regulations to conform with the wishes of some hunters would mean a speedy return to the old disastrous ways of wildfowling and wiping out the gains made the last three years in bringing back larger numbers of ducks.

He also predicted that "possibly the time will never return when any man should be allowed to kill several hundred birds of any species in a single season. When a man does that now he takes not only his own share but the shares of many other men who under our laws and form of Government are as much entitled to game as he is. Game is recognized by law as a public resource."

The regulations that have been promulgated by the Federal Government the past three years, explained the Survey Chief, have been framed with a view to reducing the legal take of waterfowl. This, he added, permitted more birds to return to their northern breeding grounds.

"In view of the fact that the birds in 1933 and 1934 were at the lowest point numerically in all their history and in connection with the land-purchase and development program for waterfowl, this seemed, and still seems, to be the only sane procedure," he said. "Obviously, it would be foolish to spend millions of dollars in rehabilitating marshes, and then have no waterfowl to make use of them after the work is done and the money expended.

"We have only asked that duck hunters restrain their enthusiasm for duck shooting for what we hope may be a temporary and comparatively short time while the restoration program is under way, so as to permit the return of breeding stocks not only to the places where they bred last year but to the new marshes that are being created. There are still under-populated breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska beyond the drought area. The fact that they are still under-populated shows that too many birds have been killed in the past."

Information on the status of waterfowl is obtained annually by Survey biologists who follow the birds from Mexico to the Arctic and back again. In addition, there are hundreds of other observers reporting to the Survey.

Supplementary information also is supplied by State game officials and other groups in the conferences held in the States with Bureau officials. The Survey has invited every governor to have a member of his State game conservation staff attend a conference in June on regulations for the next season. The conference will be held at Asheville, N.C., in connection with the annual meeting of the International Association of Game, Fish, and Conservation Commissioners. All the latest reports of the Survey on waterfowl conditions and supplementary information from the States and other sources are to be presented at the conference.